

Proposal of a special issue for Tapuya
A New History of Sociology? Southern Perspectives

To be directed by:

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Writing the history of sociology has predominantly been a Western endeavor that would hide its name. Produced in such countries as the United States, France, Germany and Great Britain for the greatest part of it, sociology offered a synecdochical disciplinary narrative that would – and most often still does – assimilate the authors, concepts, theories, journals, and institutions from these “metropolitan” countries to represent the past and present of sociology.

The “captive mind” mentality put forward by Syed Hussein Alatas is not confined to non- Western countries. It also affects – and sometimes even more effectively – Western sociologists since they have been trained in that narrative. The canonical view in most conventional accounts of sociology and social theory serves to reinforce the advantageous position of Western sociologists, inasmuch as counter-hegemonic voices challenging the historical doxa remain marginal and unheard.

This special issue aims to contribute to a new history of sociology by advancing and augmenting Southern perspectives on the circulation and production of sociological knowledge beyond the West. In contrast to those disciplinary narratives that continue to exhibit a Eurocentric bias, the papers in this special issue should i) problematize the reception of Western sociologists and classics in non-Western settings; or ii) introduce the neglected works and contributions of non-Western sociologists; or, iii) highlight some general ways in which the history of sociology can be profitably incorporated in the teaching and research of social theory.

In this perspective, “history of sociology” is much less to be understood as a mere narrative of what happened, but as a fundamental epistemological ground of the discipline. It anchors and bridges with other subfields such as social history of the social science, and science and technology studies.

A historical, reflexive account of sociology has been crucial not only for reorienting disciplinary development in the West, but also informing more recent efforts to decenter, decolonize and globalize sociology. Reflections about the making of the “canon” and the ways it can be revised, extended and even repudiated, have been instrumental not only in situating the canon but also addressing the related issues of the “founders” and “classics”. These historical problematics significantly shape our very conception of the past, present and future of sociological development. Instead of valorizing the great thinkers and works, most of which being located in the West, a proper aim of critical reflections is to shed a new light on how the practice of writing disciplinary history and its very outcome – the so-called “history of sociology” – have played a major role in the lingering exclusion of sociologists, books, concepts, theories and

institutions coming from most parts of the world. The neglected actors include not only non-Western counterparts such as Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe, the Arab World, and Africa South of the Sahara, but also other European or Western countries like Australia, Russia, Belgium, Spain and Portugal. If rethinking the canon is a viable way to rewrite disciplinary history and overcome its Eurocentric bias, reconceiving the history of sociology from the social science “periphery” will bring about new avenues in decentering the Western gaze.

By inquiring the historically specific appropriations of Western sociologists, reviving the neglected perspectives of non-Western sociologists, and unraveling the transnational entanglements in the production and circulation of sociological knowledge, a broadly construed Southern perspective would serve to open up new vistas in the teaching and research of sociology. Authors would address these critical issues with reference to contexts and developments outside the West.

Papers may address :

- the reception (in the sense of “local appropriation”) of Western sociological thinkers in non-Western countries
- the formation of “classical” sociology in non-Western countries through the highlighting of national “local” classics and figures playing a crucial role in the emergence of sociological thought
- sociological studies of how sociology was institutionalized in some Southern countries
- how this effective history of sociology can serve to decenter the West and decolonize social scientific knowledge
- cases of reorientation of the classical sociological canon

Papers shall count roughly 8 000 to 10 000 words.

Titles and abstracts are expected by June 1st.

The issue would be published in 2023.